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TEFL AND THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED.

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TWO PROBLEMS ARE IDENTIFIED IN TEACHING CULTURALLY DEPRIVED ADULTS--(1) THE CULTURAL DISORIENTATION OF THE LEARNER, WHICH DOES NOT PERMIT HIM TO IDENTIFY WITH THE TEXT CONTENT, TEACHER OR THE COURSE GOALS, AND (2) THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNDERSTANDING AND THE ADOPTION OF PROGRAMED MATERIALS DESIGNED WITH THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT IN MIND ARE SEEN AS TRENDS TOWARD SOLVING THE FIRST PROBLEM. LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE IS DIFFICULT, SINCE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS ARE DIFFERENT FOR ADULTS, AND TIME, EXPOSURE, AND PRACTICE PERIODS ARE LESS THAN IN LEARNING THE FIRST LANGUAGE AS A CHILD. (SF)

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[illegible] CULTURALLY DEPRIVED

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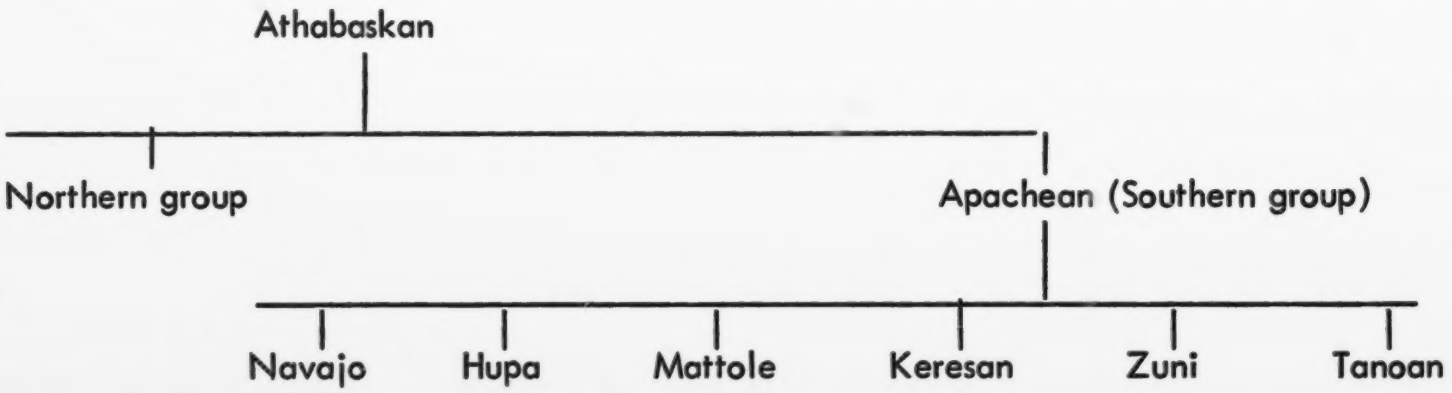
TEFL and the Culturally Deprived

Let me begin by apologizing to any linguists in the audiences for whom this treatment would seem rather cursory. It would be, of course, impossible to expect to give an indepth study of English as a Foreign Language in such a short time. What I shall try to do is give some experiences in this field as they relate to OEO programs. In this manner, perhaps the pedagogical problems will be more readily identifiable.

The New Mexico HELP program and Marymount Self-Help programs have served three distinct language groups; Spanish and several different Indian languages of which Keresan, Zuni and Navajo are the largest.



Of the Indian languages, various dialects are spoken all over New Mexico -- with some being spoken in an area no wider than a village. The Spanish spoken is generally the Mexican dialect which presents no linguistic problems. The sub-standard negro dialect (basilect) would receive much the same treatment.

There are two problems -- some language-centered, some not; but all inter-related. The first problem is basically one that we all recognize, the history of failure and academic frustration in the "white man's" school (sometimes referred to as "whitey," "anglo," or "gringo"). This has been linked with a distrust of promises of aid because of past failures and deceptions of various governmental agencies. In all cases the problem is also one of cultural disorientation, whether Mexican, Indian or Negro. The learner cannot identify with the text content, teacher, or course goals because they are lacking from his self-concept. The second problem is a complex linguistic one, that of teaching English as a Second Language -- to adults -- with many different levels of achievement and ability.

The first innovation which must be instituted is an atmosphere which exudes understanding -- and which by its very nature seems to assure success. The second innovation is the adoption of materials which will permit students to exercise different learning rates and thus progress at their own speed -- this criterion seems to demand programmed instruction materials (at least at the basic levels). The introduction of this type of material presents a "threat-free" classroom in which a teacher may more effectively operate. At higher levels we can utilize multi-level kits and teacher aides with much the same effectiveness. A discussion of the cultural content of this material leads to a possible solution of the second problem, cultural disorientation.

All materials, not simply the literacy materials, should reflect a planned acculturation program the aims of which should be (a) self-identification vis-a-vis the macro-culture, and (b) identification of the most meaningful elements of the macro-culture. The first aim is realized in the literacy portion of the program by on-site preparation of materials on the history and culture of the indigenous people as they relate to the United States as a whole. The second aim may be achieved by identifying those vocational courses or job goals which have motivated the student to participate in the program. Thus, vocabulary items and structures which are of high interest and have a high frequency of occurrence should appear more often than less important items in class and text. These items should be culled from the other courses and used to achieve an integration of the whole curriculum.

The latter problem, the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TEFL, TESL, TESPL, TESOL) is the one on which I shall now dwell for a few minutes.

1) TESOL is not the same process as teaching English to native speakers of the language. As is evident by the title and the evolution of titles, it includes the adoption of the principles and methodology of teaching a foreign language.

2) Learning a second-language is not the same as learning a first as a child except that in teaching it to children, there is less reticence and far fewer learning problems. Not only are motivational factors different for the adult, but time and exposure periods are different. Learning English by an adult cannot be learned incidentally, even in an English speaking community. Since language learning involves skill development, these skills must be practiced consciously (i.e., drills) before they can be used without constant and conscious effort. In addition, native language features will certainly cause linguistic interference in learning the target language. Thus, TESOL in an English speaking community is not the same as teaching English as a foreign language in a non-English speaking community, although basic teaching principles in both environments would have many common features. The pace of introduction of language content must be accelerated. (The uncovering "irreversibility of poverty" myth depends on rapid educational successes.)

a) Certain of the features of the sound system, vocabulary and structures will have to be given priority because of necessity of students to participate completely in an English speaking community -- e.g., vocabulary related to vocational work and to job skills must be introduced early in the course.

b) Students will pick up incidentally some sound features and some vocabulary because of the fact that they hear English spoken around them.

3) Although audio-lingual advocates would strongly suggest the supremacy of the listening-speaking skills (because of the overexaggerated fear of interference), adults must be taught reading and writing simultaneously. These skills will be needed to fill out job applications, read signs, etc. Of course, this does not mean that the listening-speaking skills will be forgotten. It is assumed that those sound features which will cause confusion will receive more intensive drill (i.e., ship-sheep).

4) TESOL in non-English-speaking communities is much more difficult than in a predominantly English-speaking one. Motivational features are diminished when markets, movies, churches, etc.

use the Spanish or Indian language. So, an additional effort must be made to provide extra-curricular opportunities, homework assignments and any other type of activity which might stimulate conversation and any other use of the language (i.e., write to President Johnson).

The last points to be covered are materials and methods which are at the same time the simplest to outline and the most difficult to implement. First, culturally deprived students will represent a real educational spectrum because there will be a wide range of achievement and abilities. With the small staffs available to most OEO projects a great disparity in student-teacher ratio becomes increasingly apparent. We have already stated that innovative techniques and materials are the only means of ensuring individual attention for each student. At the most basic level -- functional illiterate -- the four skills should be introduced simultaneously using programmed word and pre-word phonetic drills. These should, of course, utilize words which are common, and thus useful (i.e., Sullivan, Basic Reading series). Since no text embodies all the useful vocabulary needed in any given situation an imaginative teacher will create such drills using vocabulary from other areas of the curriculum. Words should be carefully but quickly expanded to pattern sequences which can then be used to teach vocabulary in context. These pattern sentences can then be drilled, expanded, transformed, etc. Now, without going into too much linguistic detail, the classroom activities should ideally involve listening-speaking activities as well as periods devoted solely to reading and writing. Since programmed materials will allow for different learning rates each classroom will of necessity have groups reaching plateaus at different times. If a teacher can then take such a group aside for practice and testing while the teacher-aide instructs the class, or at least is available for help -- we then have an equitable distribution of tasks. The programmed materials will perform most of the instruction but the teacher and teacher-aide will have to do the choral and individual drill work. These should be the basic elements of the lower courses.

At the more advanced levels, development of already existing skills must be continued in a systematic manner. Structure, the linguistic term for grammar, can be taught per se, with conscious attention being paid to contrastive analysis between the two languages (i.e., Lado-Fries series, Pronunciation Patterns, Sentence Patterns in aural-oral exercises). Reading-writing skills must be upgraded through multi-level readers (i.e., SRA Kits, Prentice-Hall Kits) which provide several readings at various interest and achievement levels, and allow self-pacing, self-correction and continuous skill development. Additional materials are needed, however, to maintain interest, to complete the cultural bridge and to introduce current vocabulary. These can take the form of graded newspapers (i.e., Laubach system, News for You) and the culturally-oriented material which will have to be prepared locally. The latter as previously mentioned should teach the history of the people as it relates to the development of the area and the United States as a whole.

At the top levels (GED, etc.), where there are likely to be fewer students, literature should be introduced as a final link in the acculturation chain. Writing, in the sense of free-composition should be an integral part of this course, refining stylistically the skills acquired previously by writing about discussion topics or reading.

Finally, TESOL must be regarded as the essential tool to the learning of the life-oriented skills which will enable the culturally-deprived to break the "poverty cycle." Since it involves four separate skills it should be allotted more time in the curriculum (1 1/2 hrs./day minimum). This committment, plus linguistically-oriented teaching materials, innovative techniques (i.e., programmed instruction), judicious use of teacher aides, selective reading, etc., will assure a progressive mastery of the language.

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